[127] Yet this Munduruca had gone nearly mad over the Peixeiranta head. He would not part with it for an instant. When the time came for me to leave Necodemus, as I shall relate below, he and twelve other Indians escorted me on my eight-day journey through the forest to the headwaters of the Cadeveri. In [129] the course of this trip, when evening came and we had to stop for the night, the Indian would thrust into the ground next to his hammock a staff which he carried expressly [83] for this purpose, and on which he would hang the head, as if on a clothes-rack, covering it carefully with a cloth I had given him.

At dawn, his first glance was for the head: he would place it in his lap, run his fingers through its long hair, and croon it as if it were a beloved daughter.

He only handed me this relic at the last moment, when I had already embarked for my descent of the Cadeveri, and then he still said: "But I wanted it for myself!" I must say I had made him a present of a double-barrelled shotgun, some gunpowder, shot-lead, and other objects. Nevertheless, his gaze followed us until our canoe had vanished down the river.

In Necodemus there was yet another mummified head. It had been the head of a Peixeiranta warrior. The Munduruca who owned it, already quite old, did not wish to show it to me and would not talk about it: I did not press the issue. Some of [130] the Mundurucu wore necklaces made from the teeth of enemies they had killed.

I saw children said by my interpreter to be captives taken in the last war. The villagers, however, did not even mention the subject; perhaps they feared that we should want to take their prisoners from them.

V

Legend of Munduruca beginnings. -- Beliefs and traditions. -- Appearance of "Caru-Sacaebè." -- Ingratitude of the inhabitants of Acupari -- Punishment. -- Necodemus as the cradle of the human race.

[131] It seemed to me that I could distinguish traces of an ancient civilization among these strange people. The Munduruca

tattooed or there was in the middle of the face a semi-lipsical, blue-black spot from which numerous, parallel lines extended over the chin and lower jaw down to the breast. From the middle of one shoulder to the other, two or three lines half an inch apart run across the broad chest. Under these there are vertically placed diamonds, some filled in, some left in outline to the end of the chest. The rest of the torso is adorned similarly though not so completely and the same lines are repeated on the extremities with or without the diamonds. Variations are introduced according to individual taste. Among women the whole face is rarely blackened, they have only a malha, a crescent shape, the pointed horns of which are turned upward. Their [288] ears are pierced, not in the lobe, but at the top in the first fold and they wear cane pegs in the holes. The face of these people is wide, with a low forehead shadowed by the hair which is cut straight across, the facial features marked, coarse and expressive of good nature. The eyes are always dark and not so slanted as the eyes of Indians of the more southerly tribes. The nose is large, often somewhat curved, not so short and blunt, with flaring nostrils, like those we have noticed among the Indians of eastern Brazil. Their heads are covered with thick, shining black hair which turns gray among the Mundrucus only late and then only in individual cases. I have never seen among them, any more than among any other Indians, an old man who was white-headed. In the wilds they are unclothed except that the men wear a jock strap [Suspensorium] of cotton or a tacanhaoba. The women I saw were wholly naked, even in the mission, and to get an apron on them for church was a matter of some difficulty. The Mundrucus and their neighbors, the Maues, with whom they are friendly, are, like the Apiacas, skilled in the art of spinning cotton thread and weaving hammocks which they hang outside their huts on hot nights. To catch fish they usually poison the water in which the fish are found.* They make

*They do this in ponds or dammed up brooks by stirring the crushed twigs and leaves of the timbo (Paullinia pinnata) into the water until it turns dark and foams. The fish, and even crocodiles, come to the surface belly up, stupefied or dead and the fish are eaten. The water is extremely poisonous.

4: Horton E-4 (no date) 1948
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through Martius reports that women participated in the battle to the extent of recovering arrows shot by the enemy and delivering them to their own warriors. He even asserts that the women "cleverly catch the arrows of the enemy in flight" (Spix and Martius, 1823-31, 3: 1,313). The usual method of attack was to assault the enemy village at daybreak and to fire the huts by means of incendiary arrows. During the fight, the war leader stood behind his warriors directing the attack. Assistants signaled his orders on their trumpets. Women and children of the enemy were taken prisoner; the women were later married by *Mundurucú* men, and the children were adopted. But enemy warriors were killed and their heads taken as trophies.

A *Mundurucú* warrior who had fought bravely but because of a wound had failed to obtain a head, received in compensation a cotton belt from which hung teeth removed from enemy heads. Such a belt might also be given to the widow of a warrior killed in battle (pl. 23, *right*), and her possession of it entitled her to be supported by the community. When a warrior had been wounded, his name was not spoken for a year; during this time he was considered to be dead. At the end of the year, a feast was given to reinstate him in the community.

Trophy heads were dried and colored with urucú or genipa; the brain cavity was filled with cotton and a carrying cord was laced through the lips (pl. 23, *left*). *Mundurucú* trophy heads were not shrunken. (Koster (1885) and Barbosa Rodrigues (1882 a) were both in error on this point.)

Steinen believes that the *Mundurucú* were cannibalistic, basing his belief on a passage in native text which seems to imply that some part of the trophy head was eaten. Kruse (1934) denies that the *Mundurucú* were in any way cannibalistic; Nimuendajú (personal communication) doubts the credibility of Steinen's informants on this subject.

LIFE CYCLE

Birth and naming.—According to Martius, the father keeps to his hammock for several weeks after the birth of a child and there receives the visits and solicitude of his neighbors. Immediately after its birth, the child is given a totemic name. Other names are added as the child grows older. If a man performs a heroic deed in hunting or warfare, his heroism will be commemorated by an additional name. When children reach their 8th year, their tattooing begins, and a boy takes up residence in the men's house.

Puberty and marriage.—Martius (1867) says that a girl at her first menstruation is required to undergo a long period of fasting "while exposed to the smoke in the gable of the hut."

A girl may be betrothed while still quite young to a mature warrior. Though she remains with her parents and the marriage is not consummated

c. Horton E-4 (no date) 1948
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PLATE III.—Mundurucú artifacts. *Left*: Prepared human hand with animal teeth set in eye sockets and a suspension cord hanging from the mouth. (Courtesy Museo Etnográfico de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Buenos Aires.) *Right*: Belt of human teeth, worn by widow of a warrior killed in combat. (Courtesy Museo Provincial Emilio Castelí, Salta.)

[facing p. 282]

7: Murphy E-9 (1952-1953)1957SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

took his trophy a short distance into the forest, where its magical effect was exorcised. But the supernatural power of the head could only be maintained when certain precautions were observed. Both the taker of the head and his wife were prohibited from sexual intercourse and were supposed to avoid looking upon any person who had recently indulged in the act. Accordingly, they lived very restricted and sequestered lives; the Dajebuši spent most of his time lying in his hammock, and his wife was assigned special assistants to perform her household and garden chores.

The Dajebuši was also responsible for sponsoring a series of ceremonies that took place during three successive rainy seasons following the return of the expedition. During the first, which took place shortly after the return of the war party, feather pendants were attached to the ears of the trophy head; certain clans had the prerogative of affixing the feathers of particular species of birds. Also, the eye sockets were sealed with beeswax and two pegs were placed across each eye. During the second phase of the ceremony, the ornaments and skin were stripped from the skull and it was retired to a corner of the men's house. The third part of the ceremony was devoted to stringing the enemy's teeth on a woven cotton belt. This ornament served as a permanent trophy of the slain enemy, and the skull was left to deteriorate in the men's house.

The final phase of the ceremony involved the greatest degree of intervillage participation, for it served as a ceremonial reunion of the *Dawẽ̀ši* or "mothers of the arrow." The Dawẽ̀ši was a society devoted to the celebration of Mundurucú arms, and included all adult males. At this time, a great feast was held, martial songs were sung, and the young boys were given instruction in the songs of the Dawẽ̀ši. At the conclusion of the celebration, the ceremonial cycle terminated and the Dajebuši and his wife resumed their normal life.[8]

No special honor was accorded the warrior who captured children. They were turned over to his wife to rear as her own. Having been incorporated into the kinship system through adoption, the children were accorded the treatment appropriate to their relationship status. In time, they married members of the opposite moiety and lived through a normal Mundurucú life cycle. Contemporary informants affirm that captives were in no way treated as inferiors, although their origins were certainly remembered. Young men were said to have taken part in Mundurucú war parties, even in attacks against their native group. No cases of defection were reported.

GOALS OF WARFARE

George Fathauer (1954:110) maintains in a recent article that the Mohave "conception of war was largely non-instrumental: it was an end in itself." The Mundurucú looked upon warfare in much the same way; war was considered an essential and unquestioned part of their way of life, and foreign tribes were attacked because they were enemies by definition. This basic orientation emerged clearly from interviews with informants. Unless direct, specific questions were asked, the Mundurucú never assigned specific causes to particular

11: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1958
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it, and it served as a general organization for persons of warrior status. The *Dajebeiš* was the leader and organizer of these festivities also and he customarily sent two messengers to the chiefs of the other Mundurucú villages to issue the following invitation: "Come, eat the hide of the game of the *Dajebeiš*. Come, drink corn and eat. It is only a mouthful, but come." The chiefs then called their people together and announced, "They want us to come and eat and drink. Everyone who wishes may go." The invited villagers, who had long known of the impending ceremony and were expecting the invitation, cut their hair and ornamented themselves in the traditional Mundurucú style and set out the next day. Food had been amassed by the people of the host village and all settled down to feasting and completing their body painting.

On the day after their arrival, a member of the *Pusbatêt*[1] society, an exclusive group composed of old and valiant *Dajebeiš* who had mastered great knowledge of love and songs, sounded the pan, a musical instrument used only by them. At this signal all the young boys, who had previously been tattooed and painted, fled into the forest and underbrush to hide from the men. The men then spread throughout the environs of the village and each captured a previously selected boy of the other moiety. The captor decorated the boy with necklaces and belts of glass beads (i.e., during the nineteenth century) and monkeys' teeth. By the time all had been assembled, dusk had already fallen, and the *Daxdebi* society returned to the village in a single file with the boys in the lead. All the men marched with bows and arrows set in release position. The women remained in the dwelling houses, for it was believed that any who saw the *Daxdebi* enter the village would be killed during the next war.

After entering the village, the men went to the house of the *Dajebeiš*, where they were served food and drink. A number of small ceramic vessels were laid out in a line and filled with various types of meat in a sauce made from the Brazil nut. Behind each bowl of meat was another filled with a drink prepared from sweet manioc. The line of men passed single file down the row of bowls, each man squatting on his haunches and taking one piece of meat with beiju (a flat manioc flour cake) and a sip of the sweet manioc drink. Then, still squatting, he moved to the right and took another piece of meat and beiju and another sip of the drink. When he reached the end of the line he returned to the beginning; the process was continued until all the food was eaten.

Certain precautions were taken with the drinks because of the sacred nature of the occasion. The Vultures had to eat apart from the other *Daxdebi*, for if one of the latter were to drink from the same vessel he would turn into a vulture when he died. Also, the sweet manioc drink could be made only by young girls and old women to avoid the threat of contamination of the drink by a drop of menstrual blood or semen from the vagina of a mature woman. The men were prohibited from sexual intercourse immediately before the ceremony for they too could contaminate the beverage and cause others who drank from the vessel to fall victims of the yellowing sickness, or *ujewaid*. To prevent this a shaman examined the

[1] The identity of this term with the Spanish word for 'girl' is an interesting but entirely independent parallel.

11: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1958
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a. Young Mundurucú man. Note tattooed vertical lines on neck and continuing one of ear plugs and arm bands. The houses of Cafezal are in the background.

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b. Mundurucú women gathered in the communal shed in which farinha is made.

[end plate 2]

12: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
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THE SETTING

try of the Tapajós River. To the north, the terrain is covered by dense rain forest, but south of the Mundurucú country are great stretches of savannah that continue into the Planalto de Mato Grosso. Their distinct preference for unforested village locales could only have been acquired in their present home or further south. The previously mentioned cultural characteristics suggest the latter, although I can at present offer no further corroboration of this possibility.

Although the Mundurucú regard their traditional homeland as the area of mixed gallery forest and savannah between the Cururú and Tropas rivers, only about 300 of the 1,250 surviving Indians live there. Another 700 live along the banks of the Cururú itself, and approximately 200 on the Tapajós River and tributary streams. The person in search of the exotic would be sorely disappointed at his first contact with the Mundurucú. They dress in Western style garments, albeit ill-fitting and rugged, and they adorn themselves with glass beads, brilliantine, plastic combs, and religious medallions. The five-gallon gasoline can is a far more important artifact than the clay pot, and they cook in aluminum pans. Since the Indian strain is so strong in the genetic make-up of the north Brazilian, the Mundurucú do not stand out sharply from their neighbors in physical characteristics. This is especially true of the younger Mundurúcú who are no longer tattooed from head to foot as their parents were.

The way of life of the Mundurucú residents of the Tapajós shore is especially close to that of their Brazilian neighbors. That the fundamental methods of farming and fishing are similar among both populations is not surprising, as north Brazilian subsistence techniques are largely Indian-derived. But beyond that, the Tapajós-River Mundurucú live in single-house isolation and not in villages